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THE MUSICAL TIMES,

And Singing Class Circular.

FEBRUARY 1st, 1849.

NOTICE.

A large space in our present Number is dedicated to the paper by Mr. J. D. COLLET, which it was thought advisable not to divide; but the choice of a short piece of music enables us to give nearly the usual average of additional matter. Arrangements have been made for about 300 Literary and Mechanics' Institutions to receive the *Musical Times* in future gratuitously; and we have to request that the authorities of these several establishments will let the work be seen and preserved in their reading rooms. Should any errors have been made in the mode of direction, an early communication is solicited.

ON MUSICAL DEGREES.

THE letter on this subject inserted in the *Musical Times* (ante page 93, vol. iii.), appears to have excited a good deal of attention, if we may judge from the correspondence it has induced. It has been pointed out to us, that, in matter of detail, "An English Musician" has fallen into some inaccuracies; no room being necessarily to be hired, a public room being appointed for the purpose. "A Mus. Bac., Oxon.," whose letter we give entire, points out that the small sum supposed to be paid to the Professor is even less, in fact, which only makes the excess greater, of what must be considered useless expense; for it does not appear to us that the performance of the composition in Oxford answers any real musical purpose—indeed, few, if any, of the Members of Convocation possess a sufficient amount of musical knowledge, to justify their interposing their *non placet* between the candidate and the degree. The main object of "An English Musician's" letter, proposing that some means be taken for placing the degree within the reach of all whose musical attainments entitle them to the distinction, by removing the unnecessary costliness, and thus giving the public the right to insist on such a criterion previously to giving their confidence to teachers, appears so reasonable and necessary, as to have excited general approval. From the letters expressive of these views, we print that of "One of the Profession," residing in a country town. It is to be hoped that the change may be urged on the Universities; or what would, perhaps, be easier to accomplish—to attach the power of conferring Degrees in Music to the London Universities, and make the conditions more in consonance with the requirements of the present day.

MUSICAL GOSSIP.

(From the *Athenæum*.)

A series of three miscellaneous concerts was commenced on Monday evening last at the *Whittington Club*. To judge from the *programme* of the first, we are far more kindly disposed towards the lectures on music with illustrations promised to be given there, than towards aimless selections, into the composition of which trash so largely enters. If we were to reason from this concert bill, as from those of the *Wednesday Concerts*, we might lament that English taste is so much lower in vocal than in instrumental music. But this would be jumping at a conclusion short of the truth. The disproportion arises in part from the matter being too readily taken for granted by managers,—in part from their unacquaintance with the real means of conciliating a love for what is good with a love for what is popular—but most largely from the inferior cultivation of the Singer as compared with the Instrumentalist. A voice almost in a state of a *rough diamond* can make its effect in a ballad,—but many hours and days and months must Miss Loder, or M. Thalberg, or M. Vivier, have worked in secret, ere they were presentable in an orchestra. Our earnestness in repeatedly calling attention to this matter must not be misunderstood. An attempt to fix boundary lines and establish principles at a period of such great activity and excitement as the present, must not be mistaken for a "dead set" against particular persons or enterprises.

The English are beginning to be aware that the enjoyment of Music requires some cultivation on the part of the listener. Should we do well, then, to aid in promoting a species of pleasure, the very easy acceptance of which is in part (not altogether) an evidence of its worthlessness? We are watching with great satisfaction the disappearance of the green plaster Macaw and the red-cheeked Cupid protruding out of a cabbage-rose from the mantel-shelves of our cottages and the walls of our artisans' work-rooms. It would then be a grave inconsistency did we not denounce performances which no more come within the circle of Art, than the flaunting bird of the image-vendors or the God of Love in the coarse coloured print with its gilt frame.—Furthermore, in our anxiety to see the cheap and popular entertainment heightened in tone,—and in our desire that the artists who "have the ball at their feet" should, in some measure, teach their audiences,—we are not so Quixotically far a-head of the public as to be "out of (their) sight" or "out of (our) mind." A tiny pamphlet, circulated by Mr. J. Alfred Novello, containing a statement of the reasons "which have determined" him "to reduce the price of his musical publications,—the majority of them to the full extent of 50 per cent.,"—will furnish us with a passage or two fully justifying our desires from the charge of their being Utopian.

"During the last twenty years," says the writer, "there has been a progressive increase in the culture of music. In the earlier part of this period, classical works were published only with great sacrifice on the part of the printer, and the demand for such works was so limited, that the cost of engraving, printing, and payment to the composer, was obliged to be divided amongst a small number of copies, and this small number took many years to sell. The advance made in the culture of classical music within the last few years of the period first mentioned, has so much multiplied the buyers of the better class of music, that it has induced the experiments which I have

been making by the publication of Oratorios and Church Music at prices which could only repay the first outlay by the sale of numerous copies."

The success of these experiments has led to Mr. Novello's spirited determination,—to the result of which we wish all possible good fortune. Some such step we have long foreseen must be taken. But so emphatic a warrant for it as the above *prospectus* registers ought not to be lost upon managers, concert-givers, composers, or executant artists. [*Athenæum*.]

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the "Musical Times."

SIR,—As the subject of "Musical Degrees" has lately created some attention, I think it worth while to make a few remarks on a letter signed "An English Musician," which appeared in the last part of your periodical.

In this letter it is stated that the principal conditions for obtaining the degree of Mus. Bac., is "the composition of a piece of music for voices, in five parts, with an accompaniment for the organ." I know nothing of the practice in these matters at Camoridge, but the latter part of this sentence is incorrect, so far as it concerns Oxford, for there the exercise for a Bachelor's degree is required to be "for voices, in five real parts, with *instrumental accompaniment for a small full band*."

I am aware that a few exercises for this degree were allowed to be performed without orchestral accompaniments during the latter years of the life of the late Professor (Dr. Crotch); but I have authority for stating, that such a dispensing power will not be exercised in future.

The Professor's fee at Oxford for examining the composition of a candidate, is one guinea—not three guineas, as stated in your correspondent's letter. It would seem, also, that some misconception prevails as to the items of a candidate's expenditure; since it is by no means so "objectionably appropriated" as "An English Musician" supposes—but, on the contrary, the bulk goes into the hands of the resident musicians of Oxford, and it is to be hoped, does in this way directly "forward the interests of the musical art."

Be it remembered, that the University statutes require the public performance of the exercise; and thus furnish the powerful check of public opinion, in addition to the ordeal of the Professor: and it is plainly right, that the University which confers the distinction should have the opportunity of hearing the composition which is to obtain it; more especially, since every Member of Convocation possesses the right to interpose his *non placet* between the candidate and the degree.

As to "proof that the composition is really the production of the candidate for honours," there is only one law at Oxford, so far as I know, which tends towards securing it—that which requires a certificate that the candidate has studied both the theory and practice of music for a period of at least seven years, signed by three or more persons of repute.

I heartily approve of your correspondent's suggestion, that an examination upon paper would be a most desirable mode of testing the musical scholarship of candidates; but it must be in addition, of course, to the requirements already demanded by statute and custom. How far such a practice might be introduced by the Professor of Music at his own discretion, I am unable to say.

I am, Sir, your faithful servant,

MUS. BAC., OXON.

To the Editor of the "Musical Times."

SIR,—It was with great pleasure that I perused the letter on "Musical Degrees" in your last number, and I think the subject worthy of the serious consideration of all "English Musicians." I quite agree with your correspondent, that, were the cost of a degree brought down to a reasonable sum, there would be few young professors who would not strive to obtain that which would be a guarantee for their having a certain degree of skill in composition.

The provinces are now inundated with persons styling themselves "Professors of Music," who have never received a Musician's education, but who, by means of undercharging, &c., contrive to reap a decent harvest; whilst for him who has studied hard at his profession from childhood, is left a miserable pittance. And this must be the case, as long as there are no means by which the public can readily detect the shallow pretender.

In this very town, I can, at the present moment, count seven persons calling themselves "Professors," who could not correct the simplest exercise in thorough bass.

Why should not English Musicians join in petitioning for an alteration in the laws for obtaining musical degrees, by means of which, the young aspirant, after having proved himself worthy the distinction, may add Mus. Bac. to his name, upon payment of a reasonable sum? And if the plan for the foundation of Musical Scholarships, as suggested by your talented correspondent, could not be managed at first, there might be some means discovered of rewarding those who obtained their degree with more than usual credit to themselves. Such a chance of distinction would be the means of inciting young musicians to greater zeal, and would, unquestionably, raise the art in the estimation of the public, and place it in the same rank as the other learned professions.

I shall be glad to see the further communication on the subject promised by "An English Musician," and shall rejoice if our brother Professors unite in petitioning for the alteration proposed.

I am, Sir, very truly yours,

ONE OF THE PROFESSION.

A GENERAL MEETING OF THE SACRED HARMONIC SOCIETY took place on the 23rd instant, at Exeter Hall, and was fully attended by the members, there being about 150 present. The *Musical World* of Jan. 27th, has a long report of this meeting, occupying nearly four of their large pages, and to that paper we would refer those who are interested in the matter, and must content ourselves with a mere outline of the proceedings. The report alluded to the difficulties with which the Society has had to contend in the earlier part of the year, but that, notwithstanding, it had greatly increased both in stability and efficiency; and in the necessary changes which had taken place, it had retained its distinctive character, as essentially an amateur body. The number of subscribers had increased, and the necessary though strict regulations of the committee for more efficient rehearsals had been readily complied with by the members. The Society had publicly performed during the year 1848, the following Works:—Haydn's *Creation*, Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*, *Elijah*, and *The Hymn of Praise*, (*Lobgesang*), Handel's *Messiah*, *Israel in Egypt*, and *Dettingen Te Deum*; and there have been rehearsed in addition to these, Handel's *Judas Maccabæus*, *Saul*, and *Solomon*, *Beethoven's Mass in C*, and *Haydn's 3rd Mass*.

The Society after a lapse of six years, has now